

In light of the recent reports that the government may have overpaid for the assets it acquired under the Troubled Asset Relief Program, commonly known as TARP, I thought it might be helpful to provide you with a bit of information about what has been going on with TARP and what these numbers mean.

Since TARP was created in October, 2008, the Department of the Treasury has used those funds to assist more than 350 different banks. On Thursday, February 5, Elizabeth Warren, Chair of the panel Congress created to oversee TARP, testified that Treasury had spent \$254 billion to purchase assets from these banks. When Congress created TARP, Treasury Secretary Paulson was charged only to purchase assets at market price, but Chairwoman Warren reported that the assets have been assessed at a value of only \$176 billion, a difference of \$78 billion. While this assessment is only an estimate, it has certainly caused some concern. In part, this is another example of why Congress insisted on new, stronger regulations of TARP with this year's TARP Reform and Accountability Act of 2009 (HR 384).

Transparency was never a high priority of the Bush Administration, but we insisted on it from the start, and HR 384 has only increased the demands for a strict accounting of how TARP money is used. Fortunately, the Obama Administration appears to share our desire to make sure that the public can see exactly what's being done. Treasury's website, for example, publishes [a new spreadsheet](#) roughly every week, listing every bank that has received funds from TARP, when they got the money, and what it was for. The non-profit ProPublica corporation has created [a useful map](#) based on those figures that shows where all of these banks are. The map makes clear, for example, how widespread the expenditures have been - with banks in 42 states receiving assistance - and where those banks are located.

Transparency is a very good thing, but it's only part of the solution, of course. Congress, through the Congressional Oversight Panel, through new legislation, and through further hearings, will continue to press Treasury to use TARP and other resources wisely, just as you will continue to press us in Congress. It cannot be denied that the rollout of TARP has included mistakes and missteps, in addition to successes. Some of each can be attributed to Congress, and many to the sheer difficulty of the problem we are facing. But I am committed to ensuring that we put in the time and effort such a massive undertaking warrants, and to keeping you, the people, informed and up to date every step of the way.

Treasury's Spreadsheets on TARP Expenditures:

<http://www.treas.gov/initiatives/eesa/transactions.shtml>

ProPublica's Map of TARP Recipients:

<http://www.propublica.org/special/show-me-the-tarp-money>